

Hello!

Welcome to the fourth newsletter from the Lambeth GP Food Co-operative. There's plenty of exciting news and updates from our latest activities, as well as some personal reflections and a chance to get to know our team.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. If you have any ideas for future stories or want any more information please get in touch with us by email gpfoodcoop@gmail.com, and don't forget to keep up-to-date with our activities through Twitter [@gpfoodcoop](https://twitter.com/gpfoodcoop).



NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2015

New orchard at Mawbey!

Since it began in May 2014, the Lambeth GP Food Co-op garden project at Mawbey Brough Health Centre has gone from strength to strength. Including our group leader, Izzi Ramsay, we now have eleven people involved. Several have health issues, but while gardening is good therapy for what ails mind or body, I think that both the fit and not so fit among us gain much from what is a sociable and rewarding activity.

Though still on a learning curve as to which crops work best, we have had plenty of successes. Among a variety of other items, we have grown peas and beans, tomatoes, potatoes, garlic, courgettes, beetroot, carrots, leeks, lettuces and even squash. The hit and miss summer was a bit of a hindrance, but even so, yields were well up on the previous year. We grew zero broccoli this year, however, because last year the rapacious cabbage white butterfly caterpillars scoffed the lot!

Most excitingly, we now also have an orchard. With the assistance of the Urban Orchard Project (and many thanks to them), back in early spring we planted five apple and four pear trees of the dwarf variety, along with two full-sized apple trees. Well, the latter will be full-sized when they get all grown up! Alongside these, we have redcurrant, white currant and blackcurrant, as well as three varieties of gooseberry and, generously donated by Dr Logan, a loganberry bush. (Can't think why the good doctor chose loganberry!) Other members of the practice team have also been kind enough to donate some lovely rose bushes and we are hoping for a really beautiful display come next summer.

Along with the side garden, we have expanded our activities into the central courtyard. At first it was a bit of a jungle, but with a lot of hard work, particularly the digging up of (expletive deleted) tree roots, it is really coming together. We also have our eyes on the front of the surgery and intend getting some roses and hanging baskets in place to give the entrance a more attractive and welcoming look.

We have also built our own planters from scrap timber and even have an old bath full of soil which is currently home to a bed of leeks. If there is an available spot to grow something - from vegetables, to flowers, from salad stuff, to herbs - we are doing our best to make use of it and fully intend continuing that trend in the coming year.

As well as our gardening activities, we have also had several bring and share open days, where practice staff and garden volunteers have got together to share tips and stuff our faces with tasty homemade food. From this, earlier this year, we even put together a cookbook of recipes submitted by the staff and gardeners.

In closing, I can say I heartily recommend joining a garden group. Whether it's for the pleasure of growing your own fresh produce, for taking up an active hobby, or simply to combat social isolation, I think these schemes can only benefit both individuals and communities. No experience necessary, just a willingness to get involved!

Tony Groves, Lambeth GP Food Co-op member at Mawbey Group Practice

On Wednesday 7th October we welcomed Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive Public Health England to the Lambeth GP Food Co-op. Members of the co-op including patients and staff from several GP practices talked to Duncan about their involvement in the project and how it has benefited them. We had delicious cakes and tarts made from produce grown across the project. Our thanks to Elizabeth and Gill for their culinary skills.

Speaking of the Lambeth GP Food Co-op, Duncan commented that "It is a formidable achievement making a positive difference for local people, helping themselves to better health and making new friends and connections...It is exactly what we mean by public health in action."



Participants and supporters of the Lambeth GP Food Co-op from across the borough including colleagues from General Practice, Public Health and the local health community meeting Duncan Selbie.

Learning with the co-op

We are five postgraduate students from King's College London and were lucky enough to be placed in the Lambeth GP Food Co-op for three weeks as part of our public health placement. With ever increasing pressures in the NHS, the prevention of lifestyle related conditions is higher than ever. Public health and initiatives such as the Lambeth GP Food Co-op aim to help communities improve their health in positive and friendly environments, which in turn should help reduce costs within the NHS over time.

Our main project in our short time with Lambeth GP Food Co-op was to investigate the evidence and research behind the benefits of gardening and health. Having evidence behind an initiative is extremely important to help different groups understand the benefits a project may have and to help with things like funding. We hope our work with the Lambeth GP Food Co-op will have helped spread the word of the importance of gardening for health, as well as the value projects such as this have in community.

By far the best part of this experiencing has been meeting the amazing and inspirational people involved in the project from club leaders to the patients involved, all who were welcoming and eager to share skills and knowledge with us. The three weeks we spent with the Lambeth GP Food Co-op passed so quickly. We have all learnt a huge amount and have seen first-hand the invaluable work that takes part in participating GP surgeries. We would highly recommend the Lambeth GP Food Co-op to anyone looking for a something a bit different to enjoy, who is wanting to learn new things and meet new people, all whilst improving your health!

Emma, Louise, Charlotte, Sarah & Rachel – postgraduate students from King's College London

Hello Fellow Readers!

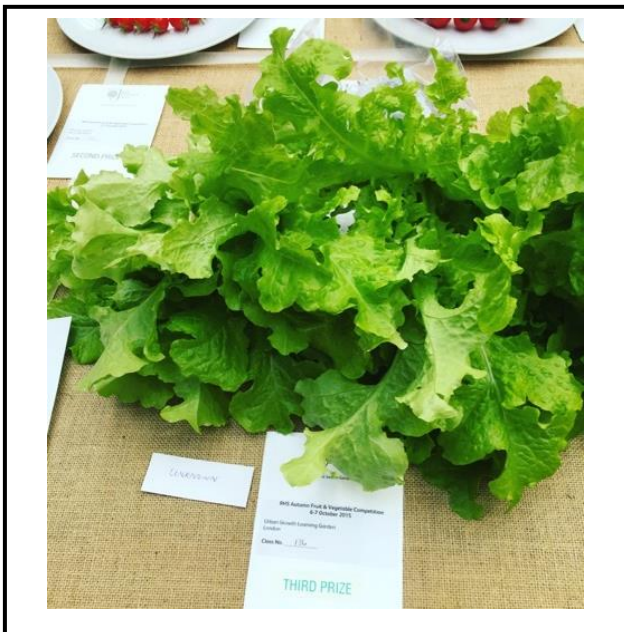
This short piece reflects the way I feel about the Lambeth GP Food Co-op garden at Jennie Lee House, De Crespigny Park, Camberwell (Kings College) in which I have been an active participant since March 2015.

Everyone from the Corner Surgery, Camberwell is welcomed as well as other members of the local Lambeth community and beyond. There are leaflets available about the project from GPs and other Lambeth services.

For me, gardening is a therapeutic hobby and I met some lovely people such as Gill and Bruno – the team leaders, Ed, Claire, Daphne, Maureen and Patricia besides countless other people. We grew fruit and vegetables mainly such as gooseberries and blackberries in the Corner Surgery and rocket salad, chard, potatoes, courgettes, cucumbers, peas, beans, carrots tomatoes just to name a few including African marigolds and dahlias in huge planters. Tidying up also took place and we as a group enjoyed tea, coffee, juice or water and cake/sandwiches and other food. At the end of each session, we could take home any produce and we all thoroughly benefited from gardening and gained valuable experience. – well I did anyway!

I do heartily recommend the group which happens for the present from 10.30am to 1pm on Wednesdays and maybe later on in the year, fortnightly sessions at De Crespigny Park Road, Camberwell SE5. Thank you teams – your support has been well treasured! If you would like to have more information, do contact the Lambeth GP Food Co-op or your GP.

Ruby Govinden, Lambeth GP Food Co-op member at Kings College Hospital



Kings of food growing

On October 6&7, the RHS held its annual London Harvest Show in Vincent Square, bringing together some of the best growers in the country, to deliver workshops, share best practice and show off their produce on competition benches. The LGFC submitted beetroot and lettuces to the judges, and our two heads of frilly leaf lettuce gained 3rd place, seeing off competition from well-established amateur growers. These were grown at our Kings College Hospital site, with patients from the Corner Surgery.

The team are definitely enthused to enter more categories next year, and we are planning our sowing schedule already!

Bruno Lacey, Lambeth GP Food Co-op member at Kings College Hospital

Fun times at Lambeth Walk

After joining Lambeth Walk Group Practice towards the end of 2014, I became intrigued by the number of people popping in and out of the garden at the back of the surgery. Looking out of the window of my clinic room is a long, narrow space with a concrete floor overlooked by Lambeth Towers. At that time several crates of soil lined the garden and I admired the people going in and out in the cold to tend to the soil followed by well-deserved tea breaks in the surgery kitchen. They always seemed to be having lots of fun!

I finally asked what was happening out there and that was when I discovered the great initiative set up by the Lambeth GP Food Cooperative. Producing healthy foods, bringing communities together and empowering patients are some of the many benefits that the cooperative has achieved. Moving forward in time from the winter of 2014 to the summer of 2015, you'd be amazed to see the transformation that has taken place in the garden space at Lambeth Walk Group Practice. There are vegetables of all shapes and sizes; it really is lovely to see. On 21st July it was great to go out and celebrate all of their hard work in the garden itself along with colleagues and the gardening team, not that we needed any excuse to eat delicious food! I look forward to the ongoing success of the Lambeth GP Food Cooperative in partnership with Lambeth Walk Group Practice.

Dr Connie Kerali, GP at Lambeth Walk Group Practice

The Lambeth GP Food Co-op at Lambeth Walk Group Practice opened its doors to nearly 40 visitors and friends, including local councillors, who dropped in to celebrate food growing in a local surgery on 21st July. Lambeth Walk was the first surgery in the Borough to join the project in 2013. Some photos from the open day are below.

